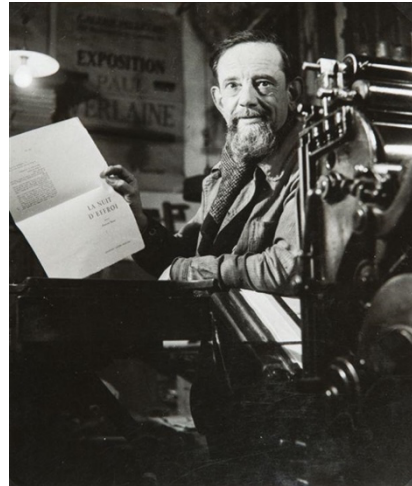


Robert Doisneau (1912 – 1994)

Born in Gentilly (close to Paris) in 1912, Robert Doisneau became a professional engraver, and from 1931 on worked as a gifted photographer. Having been exempted from military service upon the beginning of WW II, he had a job as an industrial photographer with Renault (cars) from 1934, but was fired in 1939 as he had not kept deadlines several times.

The war events that led to the occupation of northern France including Paris in June 1940 made Robert Doisneau flee from Paris and hide with friends near Bordeaux in the west of France for several months.



Yet, as the largest part of France was under German control and the so-called “free France” was ruled by the collaborationist Vichy government, Doisneau decided to return to Paris – and become a man of resistance. He did not join any of the bigger or smaller resistance groups but worked in a more or less isolated way: Making use of his abilities and talents as an engraver and photographer, he made fake IDs for persecuted people, risking his own life to help others escape.

At one incident, when time was too short to make a fake ID for a man called Serge Dobhowski, Robert Doisneau didn’t even hesitate to give away his own real ID-card to Serge – an action that would most certainly have cost his own life as well as Serge Dobhowski’s life if it had been discovered.

Having stayed undiscovered in the underground until the liberation of France, Robert Doisneau and journalist Pierre Betz began as early as the start of 1945 with a photograph report series on “imprimeurs clandestins” (clandestine pressmen) on those mostly unknown resistance fighters who had risked their lives in creating false papers and IDs.

After the war, Robert Doisneau became one of the most famous and most popular photographers of France. Up to today, many of his black-and-white photos of Paris are sold in souvenir shops.



On Robert Doisneau's life

Compiled by Martin R., Martin S. (CZ), Ruwen (GE), Alex, Teo (GR) – initially as a PowerPoint presentation and as a video: https://youtu.be/w_4zZ0h28T4

Born in 1912 in Gentilly and completing his studies at the Ecole Estienne in Paris, Robert Doisneau received his diplome as an engraver-lithographer. Photography first was only a hobby for Robert, but this changed shortly after finishing his studies and because he was very gifted he got a job as a professional industrial photographer with the Renault factories. At the end of his life he held a contract with the Vogue magazine and had become one of the most famous French photographers.

He was awarded with a lot of famous prizes for photography, for example the Grand Prix National de la Photographie (1983) and the Kodak Prize (1947). His exhibitions were hosted not only in Paris and other European cities, but also in the USA and Canada, Japan and China.

Robert Doisneau was an extraordinary photographer because he used photography as a narrative tool and tried to change the visual impact of his photos by changing the images (for example by multiple exposures) in his own little darkroom.

The themes he chose for his photographs were children at play, the busy street of Paris as well as fashion. He also took famous fotos of many artists such as Picasso, Cocteau, Giacometti, and Braque.

Another of his themes relating with his dangerous life during the Nazi occupation of France was the occupation and liberation of France. The series of photos he took and published after 1945 was called "imprimeurs clandestines" and portrayed a number of resistance fighters that had worked in the underground without being deiscovered by the Nazi regime.

Robert Doisneau was fascinated by everyday life that was his main topic. He said "The marvels of daily life are exciting; no movie director can arrange the unexpected that you find in the street."





Place St Michel, Paris, 1944

«Arrestation d'un franc-tireur», Quartier Latin, Paris, 1944



